

Amendments to the Specification

Please replace the paragraph bridging pages 12-13 with the following:

The solution that is provided to the above highlighted problem of via interconnect failure is shown in top view in Fig. 3, which specifically highlights slots that are provided in the layer of metal to which a single, isolated via is connected. Specifically highlights in Fig. 3 are:

- 30, a single isolated via such as vias 11 (Fig. 1a) or via 13 (Fig. 1b). Note that in Fig. 1a, the single via 11 is isolated from other close-together vias 41.
- 31, a layer of metal, either metal underlying (bottom metal) or overlying (top metal) an interconnect via; layer 31 is assumed to be a layer of wide interconnect metal, such as layers 16 (an overlying layer of interconnect metal, Fig. 1a) or layer 18 (and ~~an~~ underlying layer of interconnect metal, Fig. 1b) which have previously been highlighted as causing the via hump problem (Fig. 2b) or the via pullback problem (Fig. 2b).
- 32, a first slot adjacent to the interconnect via 30; typical dimensions for first slot 32 are $0.24 \times 0.8 \mu\text{m}^2$
- 34, a second slot adjacent to the interconnect via 30; typical dimensions for first-second slot ~~32-34~~ are $0.24 \times 0.8 \mu\text{m}^2$, and
- 36, a third slot adjacent to the interconnect via 30; typical dimensions for first-third slot ~~32~~ 36 are $0.24 \times 1.19 \mu\text{m}^2$.